



People in recovery usually do not relapse because they cannot handle one difficult day or one troubling situation. Any given day or any single event usually is manageable. Things become unmanageable when the person in recovery allows events from the past or fears of the future to contaminate the present.

Beating yourself up about the past makes you less able to handle the present. You allow the past to make your recovery more difficult when you tell yourself

- “I can never do anything right. I always mess up every opportunity.”
- “If I try to do something difficult, I will fail. I always do.”
- “I always am letting people down. I always have disappointed everyone.”

You need to find a way to reject those negative thoughts when they come up. The thought-stopping techniques you learned in Early Recovery Skills (session 1) can help you move past these negative thoughts. Exercise, meditation, and journal writing also help you focus your mind and control your thoughts.

**Can you think of a recent situation in which you allowed the past to make the present more difficult?**

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Don't allow things that *might* happen in the future to overwhelm you in the present. You can plan ahead and be prepared, but you can do little else about the unknown. You can address only what is happening right now, today. You are filling yourself with fear when you tell yourself



- “Tomorrow something will happen to ruin this.”
- “That person is going to hate me for this.”
- “I will never be able to make it.”

**What things do you tell yourself that make you fear the future?**

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When you have these thoughts, it may help to remind yourself of times when you did not let your past behavior influence the future. Think of times when you broke away from an old, destructive pattern. Calling a friend who can remind you of your successes is a good way to keep yourself focused on today and reject fearful thoughts of the future.

**What things can you tell yourself that will bring you back to the present?**

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